

National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) 2003 WIA Leaders Academy – Study Project POLICY & WIA REAUTHORIZATION

Eligibility – Working with Out-of-School Youth – *Shari Cornett*

Making the WIA Eligibility Process Youth Friendly...

The eligibility process should be viewed as an extension of the programs youth are trying to get into, not as a barrier that they must get over. (Screen youth in, not out.)

The physical environment needs to reflect diversity; including age.

Youth are “customers” too! Treat them with respect. Suspend judgement. Engage them in the process.

Provide written information in understandable language; include materials in languages besides English.

If eligibility is being done in One-Stop Career center; show youth around and explain services available. Let them know they are welcome.

Staff should explain things clearly; who they are; the connection they have to the program the youth is trying to enroll in to; Explain forms; ask if the youth understands; take time; don’t just rattle off, I need...return this...sign here...

Ask the youth if he/she thinks they will have difficulty obtaining any of the information you are asking for. Let them know you may be able to assist them in getting a needed document if they get stuck. Staff should give youth a business card and tell them to call if they are having problems obtaining documents. (Most documentation can be self-certified).

Utilize the “Telephone Verification” and “Applicant Statement” forms.

Collaborate! Find out what other agencies youth may be involved with that may already have needed documentation.

Communicate with referring agencies. Let them know how the youth is progressing through the process.

Complete the process in a timely manner.

Do not send youth away empty-handed! Provide alternative referrals (brochures, contact names, etc.) for youth who do not meet WIA eligibility requirements.

Quotes from a youth focus group in which the youth were asked, “What would make the eligibility process better for youth”: “Don’t make me wait too long”, “Give me good information”, “Keep track of me so I know someone cares”, “Make sure the paperwork you are asking me for is really necessary”, “Have forms that let me circle my real race”, “Make things less confusing, easier to understand”, “Be nice to me”...

Recruiting-Retaining Out-of-School Youth – *Iika Becker-Paniptchuk*

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

Developing an effective outreach and engagement strategy is one of the first challenges that communities have to address when recruiting out-of-school youths. The Alaska Youth Opportunity Program has developed and successfully implemented several strategies that not only engage youth but also engage the whole community.

EMPLOYING YOUTH ADVOCATES/ ASSISTANT YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

SPECIALISTS – The key staff, who are identified to recruit, include young men and women who represent the focus areas demographics and also backgrounds. For example, the group includes teen parents, youth on probation, and those on recovery, as well as those who have always been obvious “achievers.” Preparing the youths for their jobs required extensive leadership training, high expectations and compassion.

CAMPAIGN STYLE MARKETING – This strategy includes a mass mailing campaign within the villages and regions, delivery of flyers and posters, manning of youth centers, staffing for group intake, and asking for community support by placing signs in high visibility areas throughout the village. The staffs, when working in the community, wear white t-shirts bearing the program’s logo.

ADVERTISING – The program advertises regularly through television as well as local radio station and village CB radios.

TELEVISION COVERAGE – local cable networks provide general program coverage with special targeting to a Native audience on a program known as “heartbeat Alaska.” Program staff and youths from target villages participate in multiple discussions and interviews on youth-relevant topics, creating greater community awareness.

RAFFLES – Several CD players, CD’s, DVD were raffled off at a community event within the enterprise community. The raffle requested name, address, and age. An average of 100 raffle tickets were completed, and many attendees were converted into program participants.

PRESENTATIONS – Youth Advocates and Youth Council members are responsible for identifying and building relationships with key contacts. Power point presentations share the overview of the program’s objectives and request assistance in helping to meet goals. Calls increased as a result of partner referrals.

COMMUNITY EVENTS – Youth Advocates as Community Outreach Specialist identifies four monthly events in order to distribute flyers and promote the program services. Success has been gained by our presence at community job fairs, youth rallies and cultural events.